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## *Vietnamese Schizophrenia*

General Paul Harkins, military commander for the South Vietnamese theater, transferred to pasture; John Richardson, CIA chief, pulled back into the CIA underground; Roger Hilsman, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs and thus in political charge of Southeast Asia, headed out of Washington for the academy. The scapegoats are being paraded, classic sign of the attempt to obscure the visage of a political debacle. How much longer can the faltering Henry Cabot Lodge be allowed to wear his ambassadorial robes?

General de Gaulle, the successive coups, the victories of the Vietcong and the political campaign of the Communist-controlled National Liberation Front have combined to bring to world attention what has been from the beginning the truth about the struggle in South Vietnam: that the war against the Communists in South Vietnam can be lost but not won

in South Vietnam; that the war can be won only if anti-Communist operations are extended—to North Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and perhaps even southern China. While the Vietcong gets its continuous aliment of weapons, men, guidance and political support from the outside, no possible inside successes can bring an end.

The dilemma becomes irrepressible: accept defeat and withdraw, or expand the war. In San Francisco on February 21, the President gave it public if ambiguous recognition: those giving supplies and "external direction" to the Vietcong, he declared, are playing a "deeply dangerous game." Suddenly the leading newspapers were full of commentaries stating that the choice must be made. Secretary McNamara announces still another trip to Saigon. And Moscow and Peking, who know a thing or two about psychological warfare, reply to the President's psychological thrust with blunt—and identical—counter-threats of their own: the Soviet people will give "the necessary assistance and support" to South Vietnam's "national liberation struggle," promised Moscow, demanding a withdrawal of all American troops and equipment, and an end to American "interference." From Pakistan, where he was visiting, Communist premier Chou En-lai echoed the words of the Soviet Government which our Kremlinologists tell us his government is battling to the death: U.S. "armed intervention" must cease; "U.S. forces of aggression and U.S. military personnel must get out."

The President's choice is cruel, for there are fearful difficulties, costs and dangers along either horn of the dilemma: either in withdrawal or in the war's enlargement. It is perhaps fortunate, this being an election year, that he will not be able to get clear guidance from domestic considerations, even if he, as so completely a political being, might most naturally let them dictate his decision. The truth is that either course would most certainly be unpopular: the shame of retreat, or the blood and treasure and risk of bigger war. It seems probable, therefore, and in accord with his normal methods, that Mr. Johnson will endeavor to postpone his decision and to blunt, or seem to blunt, its sharpness, at least until after the election. But it is not clear how long postponement will be possible.